

Members of the Public Health Committee:

I am writing today to express my OPPOSITION to H.B. 5397, AN ACT DECLARING GUN VIOLENCE A PUBLIC HEALTH CRISIS AND ESTABLISHING THE OFFICE OF GUN VIOLENCE PREVENTION AND ADVISORY COUNCIL ON GUN VIOLENCE PREVENTION AND INTERVENTION.

The fundamental premise of the bill, that there is a problem in this state with "gun violence," is wrong and misguided. "Gun violence" is violence committed with a gun, but firearms are not the only implements used to commit violence. Is there a problem with VIOLENCE in Connecticut today? Assuredly yes. We live in an age when youths don't hesitate to beat down and "curb stomp" anyone who doesn't show them the proper respect. Assaults with fists, feet, knives, clubs and, yes, guns are all too commonplace. But the problem is not the guns, the problem is the attitude that violence -- with any implement -- has become the first response for many people to any perceived insult or slight, no matter how slight. A commission that is focused on "gun" violence is going to direct all of its attention to guns rather than to the underlying atmosphere of violence as a first, rather than last, resort and will therefore not make any difference in addressing the real problem.

Violence in society is not a public health issue. Violence, whether committed with guns, knives, axes, bludgeons, chain saws, or automobiles is a crime issue. The factors that make some people predisposed to resorting to violence as their primary (or only) approach to conflict resolution is not a public health problem but a sociological problem.

It would make more sense, if we need another State office at a time when our taxes are already crushing the citizens, to establish a bureau within the Department of Emergency Services and Public Protection. But such a bureau, if created, should be tasked with studying and addressing violence in general, not "gun violence."

I object in the most strenuous terms possible to the premise in Section 2(d)(2) of the bill, which calls for grants to organizations supporting reduction of "gun" violence without contributing to mass incarceration. We don't have "mass incarceration" in Connecticut. Incarcerating individuals who have been convicted of committing violent felonies is not "mass incarceration." All one has to do is read the news and see how many violent felonies are perpetrated by felons who are out on the streets on parole or on bail to recognize that the best way to protect the citizens of this state from violent crime is to incarcerate the violent criminals. Letting these individuals out of prison with just a slap on the wrist was a noble sociological experiment, and it has demonstrably failed in spectacular fashion. Look at the numbers: how many people arrested for violent crimes in Connecticut every day are repeat offenders?

Please vote AGAINST H.B. 5397.

Harwood W. Loomis, R.A.
Consulting Architect / Licensed Building Official
Tel: 203-393-3470